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Socialisation and Collaborative Learning of distance learners in 3-D virtual worlds

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Socialisation or 'knowing one another' is a key element of online learning and knowledge construction. Socialisation needs to be integrated and sustained in the collaboration process through the design of course-activities that ensure to reduce social distance amongst online learners. Virtual ice-breakers early on in collaboration may not be sufficient to develop and maintain shared understanding, mutual trust and social presence. We are involved with the following:

- investigating theoretical underpinnings for the pedagogical rationale for adopting 3-D virtual worlds such as Second Life for socialisation and knowledge creation in distance-education; and
- developing a repository of 'generic' Second Life activities that aid socialisation. The pictures below are from Second Life events (e.g. an informal Q&A session and tour of educational places), which were conducted to facilitate socialisation amongst learners.

